

California Tree Fruit Agreement
Reedley, CA

I have been involved in the tree fruit industry since 1964 and have seen our industry evolve into a diversified agricultural business industry.

Many in our industry forget that the CTFA is us. We are the ones who run and direct its activities. There are a myriad of reasons the CTFA is good for California fruit and a few reasons it is not. The good things far outweigh the bad ones.

The main thing that many in our industry forget is that CTFA is OURS. If the few vocal dissenters are dissatisfied with some of the actions of the CTFA, they have the right to solicit for changes in those areas. I have found some of these things take time to get the changes, but with persistence, they can be done.

It is frustrating to have a few of our fellow tree fruit growers dissatisfied with portions of the CTFA rules and not agreeable to working on changing the areas of dissatisfaction.

During my time as a supplier to the tree fruit industry, I have had the opportunity to observe the tree fruit industry in almost all states of the US and countries of the world.

I believe the CTFA has been instrumental in making California fruit known world wide for it's uniformity due to the grade standards and inspection requirements instituted by us, the growers. I have been a member of the National Peach Council since 1975 and was very active in it from that time to the early 1990's. During that time, I spent a lot of time working with the growers in the southeast to find ways to compete with the uniformity of the California fruit. They knew without grade standards imposed by a marketing order, they were doomed to mediocrity by the non-uniform presentation of fruit from their respective states. High markets brought out the green fruit and hurt their markets.

When the plum growers voted to abandon the Federal Marketing Order, they soon found they needed it back. Non-uniformity of packing helped to drop prices and a large crop was difficult to move.

Another very good point is the research that CTFA has funded to benefit our industry. Due to this funding there is a myriad of information that would not be available without the CTFA (our) funding. I would guess the top two concerns in our industry to be:

1. Prices
2. Chemicals

The CTFA has been very instrumental with help us in both of these areas. The uniformity of quality, the media blitz, the new focus on inducing buyer advertising, and the export programs have been a major help in giving us the chance to maintain a semblance of reasonable prices.

I have also been impressed with the ability of our CTFA to work together with the University of California, mostly through Kearny Field Station to research and

petition for changes in our chemical rules and regulations. Most individual growers would not be able to do this work. The University is having budget woes and can no longer shoulder the monetary load for this research. I applaud both organizations for working together for the benefit of all growers. Without the funding from CTFA, a lot of this work would not get done.

I am impressed with the efforts of Blair Richardson during his first year on the job and believe we have made some tremendous progress towards fixing some of the problems. Before Blair took the reigns, I was drifting away from the CTFA and was starting to get disenchanted. Last year was the first year in a long time that I would give high grade to the CTFA. I think it is imperative that we work at changing the bad and give this administration a chance to prove their worth to us.

One area of the efforts of the CTFA that has caused the most grief is generic advertising. This area should be changed and was starting to move in the direction I felt it should go last year under Blair Richardson. The advertising budget of the CTFA is too small to attempt direct consumer advertising. A successful national advertising campaign would take many multiples of the amounts of funds available from the CTFA. I have always felt we needed to approach the buyers and the media and not try to go direct to the consumer. The campaign last season to get the buyers to increase their advertising is the way to reach the consumer. I believe this program worked very well and more of what we label as "advertising funds" should be move to "promotional funds" and actually eliminate the advertising budget. Included in this promotional campaign, the export efforts should continue and we should increase the efforts to gain space in the multitude of food media of magazines, newspaper, and television programs. This media campaign is less costly than trying to reach the consumer direct.

I believe there should be no "Advertising Funds" only "Promotional Funds" to promote buyers and media to feature California Fruit. Some of the "Advertising Funds" should be move to research.

Another area of concern is what some growers call cronyism. This has always been a perception with some and in some areas has a basis for concern. The institution of term limits was a start in this direction, but the CTFA should work even harder to get more people involved. I believe we should also give the Executive the task of investigating complaints from growers and being given the authority to take action on these complaints. It is time to quit worrying about ruffling feathers and serve our industry. Every one of our members should have the right to voice their opinion.

I challenge the new administration of the CTFA to address all concerns of its Members.

George Howard
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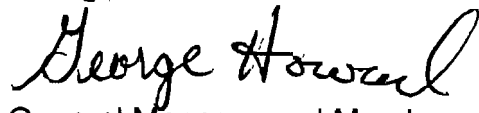
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is time to quit worrying about ruffling feathers and serve our industry. Every one of our members should have the right to voice their opinion.

I believe the new administration of the CTFA will address all concerns of its Members.

George Howard

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "G".

General Manager and Member

Agri Sun Nursery, LLC

Agri Sun Orchards

Santa Barbara Orchards, LLC